

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION REQUEST

The following constitutes an application for preliminary consideration for the nomination potential of a property to the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This does not mean that a property is being nominated to the registers at this time. Rather it is being evaluated to determine if it qualifies for such listings. Applicants will be notified of the board's actions in writing shortly after the meeting.

Please **type** and use 8-1/2" X 11" paper if additional space is needed.

All submitted materials become the property of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and cannot be returned.

1. HISTORIC NAME OF PROPERTY (if historic name is not known, use current name of area)

WASHINGTON POINT; POWDER POINT; HERBERTSVILLE;
FERRY'S POINT; TOWN OF BERKLEY;
BERKLEY (PREFERRED)

2. LOCATION

A. Street or Route Berkley Avenue, South Main Street, Stafford Street, Poplar Avenue, Hardy Avenue, Indian River Road, Hough Avenue, Bellamy Avenue, Clifton Street, Pendleton Street

B. County or City Norfolk, Virginia

3. LEGAL OWNER/S OF PROPERTIES. Include names and addresses of all property owners in district. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

Name:

Address:

City/State: _____ ZIP

4. GENERAL DATA

A. Date or dates of selected buildings: Late 19th and early to mid-20th century

B. Approximate acreage: approximately 300 acres

C. Architects or carpenter/masons (if known): L. B. Volk

D. Primary Use of Buildings: Residential--single-family; Religious; Commercial; Educational; Industrial.

5. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Physically separated from downtown Norfolk, Berkley is located across the Elizabeth River at the confluence of the Eastern and Southern branches. The formally recognized Berkley Planning District covers approximately one square mile of land and is south of downtown Norfolk and east of Portsmouth. Berkley abuts the City of Chesapeake on the south and, on the east, is adjacent to the Campostella neighborhood. The area being considered for potential historic district status is bounded by Berkley Avenue on the south, Clifton Street on the west, Bellamy Avenue on the north, and the ends of the no-outlet east-west streets on the east.

Formerly a self-governed town separate from Norfolk, Berkley comprises a variety of building types ranging from single-family dwellings to churches, commercial buildings and industrial structures. Berkley grew from its founding in 1866 as a small area around the industrial wharves of Washington's Point to the south and west. The original and oldest section of Berkley was eradicated in the 1980s with the construction of I-464 through the area; the remaining section of Berkley was visually and physically divided in two by the widening of Berkley Avenue. The area being considered for a potential historic district includes a small portion of the original plat of the Town of Berkley--a section of the town that is shown on historic maps as "Mrs. Tunis Plan" and the Hardy Estate, which was historically rural and later incorporated into the town. The "Mrs. Tunis Tract" was platted and developed with buildings by 1887; the Hardy Estate section of Berkley was platted after 1889, and was partially

developed with buildings by 1900.

The boundaries are clearly defined by a combination of visual, architectural, historical and natural conditions. The southern boundary Berkley Avenue, formerly an important east-west artery in Berkley has been significantly widened and altered, creating a visual separation between the areas north and south of the avenue. The eastern boundary is formed by the ends of the east-west streets which historically ran almost to the water's edge. Although the water was filled in, the streets were never extended and the area remains undeveloped. The northern boundary extends to the north side of Bellamy Avenue and includes the Mary Hardy MacArthur Memorial. Bellamy Avenue was the furthest northern street to be platted and developed in Berkley; the Mary Hardy MacArthur Memorial marks the site of "Riveredge," the former Hardy Estate and birthplace of General Douglas MacArthur. The western boundary runs along Clifton Street which was historically located at the eastern edge of the earliest section of Berkley, and currently forms an edge between the historic Berkley fabric and the modern highway built to its west.

This section of Berkley is laid out in a grid pattern with the important transportation corridor of Berkley Avenue clearly defining its southern edge. It is today characterized primarily by rows of detached, single-family dwellings, punctuated by churches, the Gatewood School, former commercial buildings, and abandoned industrial buildings which occupy prominent corners and edges of the area. The rows of residences tend to line the interior of the grid, while the churches, bank buildings and other commercial buildings are located along the outer edges, especially Berkley Avenue, Dinwiddie Street and South Main Street, historically the edge of the original Berkley subdivision.

The residential lots in the interior of the grid are narrow with the houses on them free-standing, but closely built together and with small yards in front. Sidewalks separate the grassy yards from the public streets and are randomly planted with an occasional tree or shrubbery. The houses are well-built and medium-sized, with smaller and larger houses tucked between the rows or at the corners. They are typically of frame construction and, despite an abundance of alterations to original materials, such as the addition of vinyl siding over wood weatherboard and asphalt shingles in place of slate or wood, retain an integrity of design and craftsmanship. Some infill, such as the row of

project housing on Bellamy Avenue, interrupts otherwise cohesive collections of late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential development. This infill, however, does not significantly detract from the overall character of the area and should simply be considered as non-contributing resources within the historic district.

Representative examples of the residential development forming the core of Berkley can be seen on Hough Avenue and Hardy Avenue, both in the heart of the area. The south side of Hough Avenue, between South Main Street and Stafford Street, consists of a row of early twentieth-century, detached, single-family dwellings. The two-story houses are built tightly together and, due to their vertical emphasis have an urban quality to them that clearly distinguishes this neighborhood of Norfolk as a former town. The houses are generally of frame construction, and have vernacular classical detailing such as front gable roofs with "Venetian-style" windows in the gable ends, double-story porches with wood columns. Across from this row of dwellings on the north side of Hough Street is a unified grouping of two- and two-and-a-half-story houses having Colonial Revival "American four-square"-type forms. This type is defined by its box-like massing, its three-bay facade, its side-passage entry and its one-story front porch. This type of house, common in the early twentieth century in residential communities, is the predominant house form in Berkley and can be found along other streets such as Poplar Avenue and Hardy Avenue.

Hardy Avenue, between South Main and Stafford Street, offers a group of three dwellings that are more Victorian in form and stylistic treatment than the more typical Colonial Revival style house. Vernacular Queen Anne massing, including projecting polygonal bays, irregular rooflines, corbelled chimney caps and turned porch posts are the character defining features of this row.

The oldest buildings in the proposed historic district are located in the oldest sections of this part of Berkley, on Clifton Street, Pendleton Street and the west side of Main Street, all south of Indian River Road. Few of the original buildings from the earliest phase of Berkley's growth survive. One house, on the west side of Clifton Street, however, provides a good example of the early architecture of the area. Designed in the Italianate style and probably built in the late 1870s, the house is a two-story, three-bay brick structure with a bracketed

wood cornice. Long, narrow windows with 2/2 sash, typical of the period and style, are capped with projecting, bracketed cornices.

A one-story porch is a later addition. This house formed one of a group of similarly designed and built free-standing houses and provides insight into the physical evolution of the area.

The larger houses in the area which were built by and appealed to the towns's wealthier residents are located on prominent corner sites, primarily along Indian River Road. The Norfleet House (122-97), built between 1900 and 1910, is located at the corner of Indian River Road and South Main Street. Built for Julian Norfleet, a physician and occupied by his family through 1950, the house is designed in a transitional Queen Anne/Colonial Revival style. It has a typical Queen Anne form, with its asymmetrical massing, complex roofline, corner tower and wrap-around porch, but offers classical features, such as the Ionic porch columns and the pedimented gable ends. Across the street and catty-corner to the Norfleet House is a large brick dwelling similarly from 1900-1910 with Queen Anne massing.¹ Other substantial houses from this period can be found at the corner of Hardy Avenue and Fauquier Street, and at the corner of Bellamy and Stafford.

While the core of this section of Berkley is primarily residential, the town was a self-sufficient, self-governing unit where schools, churches and businesses served the local residents. A variety of building types can be found forming the edges of the area, as well as important corridors and corners. Gatewood School, shown as Public School Number 2 on the 1910 Sanborn Map, was erected at the southwest corner of Poplar Avenue and Fauquier Street. This school, currently abandoned, is a red brick structure with banks of windows lighting the former classroom spaces. The building, a fine example of the public school architecture of the turn-of-the century, is currently threatened with demolition.

The southwestern corner of the area facing Berkley Avenue is well articulated with the high-Victorian Gothic Berkley Avenue Baptist Church (122-96) and the classical Planter's and Merchant's Bank (122-95), two of Berkley's most notable buildings. The Berkley Avenue Baptist Church was erected in 1885 to designs of New York architect L. B. Volk and served the congregation of the baptist

¹ The wrap-around porch has been dismantled.

church until 1959. The Merchant and Planter's Bank was erected in 1900 to serve as the main office of this pioneering banking institution in the Berkley area. Constructed of brick with a limestone facade, the bank building is designed in an elegant Classical Revival style. It has a three-bay facade articulated by Ionic columns and a central entry door set within an engaged pediment surround. The flat roof is capped by a classical parapet.

Further east along Berkley Avenue, at the corner of Berkley Avenue and Main Street, sits the Seaboard Bank building. Built in the 1920s for Seaboard Citizens, the building is also classically inspired; the one-story structure features three bays of large arched openings on both the Main Street and Berkley Avenue elevations. The southeastern edge of the proposed district is defined by another prominently sited church building at the corner of Berkley Avenue and Dinwiddie Street. This church, with its corner tower, invites the passerby off of the Berkley Avenue boulevard and into the residential enclave. Dinwiddie Street is actually a transitional edge, where residential, commercial and religious architecture co-exist.

Only scattered remnants survive of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century industrial architecture which was once found in the northern tip of land jutting into the eastern branch of the river. This peninsula of land was serviced by Main Street which ran the full extent of Berkley from north to south. Just beyond the residential areas, industrial buildings lined the road and strung out in a linear fashion to the uppermost tip. Today little evidence of the booming industrialism of Berkley survives.

Outside the boundaries of Berkley, Colonna's Shipyard stands as the most significant and potent reminder of the area's industrial heritage. Founded in 1875 by Charles J. Colonna, Colonna's Shipyard began as a small marine railway at the foot of Main Street in Berkley. The shipyard grew throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries and continues to be owned and run by the Colonna family today.

The Mary Hardy MacArthur Memorial (122-98), located at the northern end of South Main Street, north of Bellamy Street, marks the site of 'Riveredge'--the Hardy family estate and birthplace of Mary Pinckney Hardy (MacArthur). A low brick wall surrounds a grassy plot, planted with mature shade trees.

Although this section of Berkley is only part of what was

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historically and currently called Berkley, it survives relatively intact and offers an understanding of the physical and historical growth of the area. The proposed historic district includes a part of the original town as platted by Lycurgus Berkley, a subdivision of Berkley shown on maps as "Mrs. Tunis Plan" and a subsequent subdivision of the once-rural Hardy Estate. The area consists of a cohesive grouping of a variety of building types, illustrating the once self-sufficient nature of the former town.

6. HISTORY

Annexed by the City of Norfolk in 1906, the Berkley section of Norfolk was, prior to that, a separate town. The town was established by Lycurgus Berkley in the mid-nineteenth century and was known at various times throughout its history as Powder Point, Ferry Point, Herbertsville, Washington Point, Washington Town or just Washington. From its founding as a town, the area developed as a self-sufficient community that experienced its heyday between 1880-1900 as a manufacturing, shipbuilding, and lumber center of Tidewater Virginia. Following the Depression, Berkley suffered a serious economic and social decline and was victim, in the 1960s, of significant racial unrest. Berkley has been the focus of redevelopment efforts since the late 1960s and early 1970s. The City of Norfolk prepared a General Development Plan for Berkley in 1970 which was again updated in 1982. The area is currently under development pressure and is at risk of losing its surviving architectural and historic integrity.

Berkley's heritage can be traced to 1644 and 1666 when the Herbert family of Lower Norfolk County received land grants at the juncture of the Eastern and Southern branches of the Elizabeth River, the present site of Berkley. By the early 1700s the Herbert family of ship builders and sea captains had established a prosperous shipyard on what was later known as "Berkley Flats." This shipyard remained in use for well over a century and produced many vessels used during the Revolutionary War.²

In 1700, the Borough of Norfolk chose the area as the site for its municipal powder magazine, specifically locating the munitions store house at a distance from Norfolk for safety reasons. In 1728, Col. William Byrd of Westover who was in Norfolk at the time, referred to the site in his journal as "Powder Point." Later in the eighteenth century, the area was referred to as Ferry Point, because a ferry connecting the lower sections of Norfolk County ran between the Berkley side of the river to the County Dock on the Norfolk side. In the late eighteenth century, Berkley was renamed Washington Town or Washington Point in honor of George Washington. Although some

² "Berkley Once Wealthy," Virginian Pilot, Jan. 18, 1967, p. 15.

historians claim that there is no truth to the lore, local tradition holds that Berkley was proposed as the location of the national capital, but was rejected because the site was too near the coast and could not be properly defended.³

One of the first Marine Hospitals in the United States was established on what is today Chestnut Street; and in 1803, the Norfolk County Courthouse was erected at Walnut and Elm Streets after moving from Main Street in Norfolk and before being transplanted to Portsmouth. The erection of the courthouse encouraged further growth and development, and the area still referred to alternatively as Washington, Washington Point or Washington Town was described in 1853 in Forrest's History of Norfolk as a "neat and pleasant little village."⁴

Although much development had occurred in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the area in and around Washington Point, Berkley did not begin to fully mature until it was established as a town by Lycurgus Berkley in 1866.⁵ Lycurgus Berkley (1827-1881), from Fairfax County, Virginia, moved to Norfolk in 1852. He married Eliza Middleton whose family owned much of the land where Berkley is today. The young couple moved into a farmhouse, no longer standing, that was located on the site currently bounded by Chestnut, Middleton, Walnut and Westmoreland Streets. Perhaps seeing the natural growth of the area, Lycurgus Berkley subdivided the farmland adjoining his property and established a town, which he called the Town of Berkley. The 1876 Beers' Map of Portsmouth, shows that the peninsula of land at the confluence of the two branches of the Elizabeth River, just below the wharfs and ferry of Washington Point was fully platted with streets (Middleton Street being named after his wife's family). This peninsula included the area west of Main Street and north of a water inlet which was shortly thereafter filled in. The parcel of land south of this inlet was called Montlant, but became a

³ George H. Tucker in "Berkley Once Wealthy," Virginian Pilot, Jan. 18, 1967, p. 15, claims that this is "old Berkley Tradition" with "no foundations in truth." Further research into the history of the establishment of Washington, D.C. at its current site would elucidate this matter.

⁴ W. H. T. Squires, "Norfolk in By-gone Days," The Ledger-Dispatch, Dec. 31, 1942.

⁵ "Berkley," Public Ledger, March 7, 1884.

part of Berkley, along with the infilled inlet by 1889. The area west of Main Street and north of Berkley Avenue was, in 1876, primarily still farmland and shown as the Hardy Estate. Thomas Asbury Hardy was the grandfather of Army General Douglas MacArthur; his estate included one of the original Herbert family houses, "Riveredge," which was the birthplace of the General's mother. The house site at the edge of South Main Street on the waterfront is today commemorated by a memorial marker, called the Mary Hardy MacArthur Memorial.

Although platted with streets in 1876, the land still appears as sparsely developed on maps, consisting of Lycurgus Berkley's house, and limited industrial structures such as a boat landing and a mill. In 1884, however, the area is described in a newspaper account of being a "village of more than 2,000."⁶ Berkley was connected to both Portsmouth and Norfolk by ferry service and, by 1884, was the site of the Norfolk Southern Railroad depot.

According to the 1887 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, the Town of Berkley had matured into a viable town with streets lined with houses, stores, a school, churches, social buildings, and a significant collection of industrial concerns, such as lumber yards, mills, iron foundries, and more. In general, the industrial development was concentrated along the wharfs and railroad spurs on Washington Point, but some light industrial buildings could also be found scattered amongst the predominantly residential streets. In 1890, Berkley was incorporated by an act of the Virginia Assembly. Bond issues were floated to improve the area's streets, establish a cemetery and make other improvements.

By 1900, Berkley had expanded east of earlier boundaries and new streets were platted on what had been the rural Hardy Estate. This section of Berkley, laid out in a grid that ran diagonally to the grid of the original Berkley, continued the town east of South Main Street to the water's edge. The development in this area of the town was less industrial, offering a residential community, replete with the necessary support services, to the industrial town. It is this section of Berkley that retains its historic character and architectural integrity and that is being proposed here as a potential historic district.

⁶ "Berkley," Public Ledger, march 7, 1884.

The large and small industrial concerns together brought prosperity to the area that endured from the 1880s to after World War I. The industrial prosperity encouraged further development and encouraged the town's self-sufficiency. Financial institutions, such as the Merchant's and Planter's Bank and the Atlantic Permanent and Berkley Permanent Building and Loan associations were established that helped finance the area's continued growth. In 1906, the Town of Berkley was annexed by the City of Norfolk, becoming the city's 8th ward. At that time and until the Depression, Berkley was a predominantly middle-class, white community with a working-class African-American enclave clustered near the industries in which they worked.

During the early 1920s, Berkley's prosperity began to decline. The lumber mills that had been working to capacity around the turn of the century were closed down as the timber stands throughout the Tidewater and North Carolina were depleted from over-timbering. Prohibition closed the Garrett Winery that stood on the waterfront to facilitate shipment of goods all over the United States. As these businesses closed, new ones chose to located themselves in South Norfolk. Finally, in 1922, Berkley suffered a disastrous fire that left 300 houses destroyed and 1500 people homeless. The fire, which began at Tunis Lumber Wharf, spread across five hundred yards of undeveloped land to a close-knit African-American community, destroying it almost in its entirety.

The closing of industries, the disastrous fire, and the onslaught of the Depression resulted in a significant drop in property values in Berkley. The well-established, home-owning white families that had been instrumental in building Berkley crossed the river to Norfolk. The flight of Berkley's upper classes led to an insidious social and economic decline that has never been reversed. At first lower-class white tenants replaced the former upper and middle classes. Eventually, as opportunities became even more limited, these single-family dwellings were converted into large rooming-houses that attracted the less-fortunate. Rural black families from southern Virginia and North Carolina came to Berkley, as did others. By the 1950s, Berkley was almost entirely black and impoverished. In the 1960s and early 1970s, Berkley became the focus of an urban-renewal program that, while providing more adequate and affordable housing, resulted in the destruction of much of the former-town's historic fabric, such as was carried out with the Bell-Diamond Manor Redevelopment

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project. In the early 1980s, the interstate highway eradicated the original section of Berkley, at Washington Point, and widened Berkley Avenue, completely separating the southern portion of Berkley with the northern section.

7. PHOTOGRAPHS

Black and white photographs and color slides of general views and streetscapes must be provided. Photographs of important buildings in district would also be helpful. The inclusion of photographs is essential to the completion of this application. Without photographs, this application can not be considered.

Photocopies of select photos are attached. Actual photographs have been submitted in VDHR photo envelopes.

8. MAP

Please include a map showing the location of the proposed district. A sketch map is acceptable but please not street route numbers, addresses, buildings, prominent geographic features, etc. Please include a "north" arrow. This form can not be processed without a map showing the property's exact location.

See attached

9. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

10: APPLICANT INFORMATION

NAME: TRACERIES TELEPHONE: 301-656-5283

ADDRESS: 5420 Western Avenue
CITY/STATE: Chevy Chase, MD 20015

SIGNATURE

DATE: September 19, 1994

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PROPERTY NAME: Berkley Historic District

**PLEASE SUPPLY THE FOLLOWING NAMES AND ADDRESSES AS APPLICABLE.
THIS INFORMATION MUST BE PROVIDED BEFORE YOUR PIF CAN BE
CONSIDERED BY THE STATE REVIEW BOARD:**

Mayor: Paul D. Fraim
1109 City Hall Building
Norfolk, VA 23501

City Manager:
James B. Oliver, Jr.
1101 City Hall Building
Norfolk, VA 23501

Director, Planning Division

John M. Dugan, Director
Dept. of City Planning and Codes Administration
508 City Hall Building

Chairman, Planning Commission

Dr. William L. Craig, Jr.
451 Lee Point Road
Norfolk, VA

Executive Director

Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
Arthur L. Collins
723 Woodlake Drive
Chesapeake, Virginia 23320

City Council member or Supervisor in whose district the property
is located:

Paul R. Riddick
Rev. Joseph N. Green, Jr.

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